

A
LETTER
TO
LORD ONSLOW:

AS
CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING AT EPSOM,
JUNE 18, 1792,

CONVENED TO ADDRESS HIS MAJESTY ON THE LATE
PROCLAMATION.

BY
THOMAS PAINE.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR J. PARSONS,
No. 21,
PATER-NOSTER ROW.

PRICE SIX-PENCE.

1792.

Handwritten mark or signature.

TO
LORD ONSLOW.

SIR,

London, June 17th, 1792.

I HAVE seen in the Public Newspapers the following Advertisement, to wit—

“ To the Nobility, Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and other Inhabitants of the County of Surrey.

“ At the requisition and desire of several of the Freeholders of the County, I am, in the absence of the Sheriff, to desire the favour of your attendance, at a Meeting to be held at Epsom, on Monday the 18th instant, at 12 o'clock at noon, to consider of an Humble Address to his MAJESTY, to express our grateful approbation of his MAJESTY's paternal and well-timed attention to the public welfare, in his late most gracious Proclamation against the Enemies of our happy Constitution.

(Signed) “ ONSLOW CRANLEY.”

Taking it for granted, that the aforesaid Advertisement, equally as obscure as the Proclama-

tion to which it refers, has nevertheless some meaning, and is intended to effect some purpose; and as a prosecution (whether wisely or unwisely, justly or unjustly) is already commenced against a work intitled *Rights of Man*, of which I have the honour and the happiness to be the author; I feel it necessary to address this Letter to you, and to request that it may be read publicly to the Gentlemen who shall meet at Epsom in consequence of that Advertisement.

The work now under prosecution is, I conceive, the same work which is intended to be suppressed by the aforesaid Proclamation. Admitting this to be the case, the Gentlemen of the county of Surrey are called upon by somebody to condemn a work, and they are at the same time forbidden by the Proclamation to know what that work is; and they are further called upon to give their aid and assistance to prevent other people from knowing it also.—It is therefore necessary that the author, for his own justification, as well as to prevent the Gentlemen who shall meet from being imposed upon by misrepresentation, should give some out-lines of the principles and plans which that work contains.

The work, Sir, in question contains, first, an investigation of general principles of Government.

It also distinguishes Government into two classes or systems, the one the hereditary system—the other

other the representative system; and it compares those two systems with each other.

It shews, that what is called Hereditary Government cannot exist as a matter of right; because Hereditary Government always means a Government yet to come; and the case always is, that those who are to live afterwards have always the same right to establish a Government for themselves as the People had who lived before them.

It also shews the defect to which Hereditary Government is unavoidably subject; that it must, from the nature of it, throw Government into the hands of men totally unworthy of it from want of principle, or unfitted for it from want of capacity. JAMES the II^d. and many others are recorded in the English history, as proofs of the former of those cases, and instances are to be found almost all over Europe, to prove the truth of the latter.

It then shews, that the Representative System is the only true system of Government; that it is also the only system under which the liberties of any People can be permanently secure; and further, that it is the only one that can continue the same equal probability at all times of admitting of none but men properly qualified, both by principles and abilities, into the Government, and of excluding such as are otherwise.

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The work shews also, by plans and calculations not hitherto denied nor controverted, not even by the prosecution that is commenced, that the taxes now existing may be reduced at least six millions, that taxes may be entirely taken off from the Poor, who are computed at one-third of the nation, and that the taxes on the other two-thirds may be very considerably reduced—that the aged Poor may be comfortably provided for, and the children of poor families properly educated—that fifteen thousand soldiers, and the same number of sailors, may be disbanded, and allowed three shillings per week during life out of the surplus taxes; and also, that a proportionate allowance may be made to the officers, and the pay of the remaining soldiers and sailors be encreased; and that it is better to apply the surplus taxes to those purposes, than to consume them on lazy and profligate placemen and pensioners; and that the revenue, said to be twenty thousand pounds per annum, raised by a tax upon coals, and given to the Duke of RICHMOND, is a gross imposition upon all the people of London, and ought to be instantly abolished.

This, Sir, is a concise abstract of the principles and plans contained in the work that is now prosecuted, and for the suppression of which the Proclamation appears to be intended: But as it is impossible that I can, in the compass of a letter, bring

bring into view all the matters contained in the work, and as it is proper that the Gentlemen who may compose that Meeting should know what the merits or demerits of it are, before they come to any resolutions, either directly or indirectly relating thereto, I request the honour of presenting them with one hundred copies of the second part of RIGHTS OF MAN, and also one thousand copies of my letter to Mr. DUNDAS, which I have directed to be sent to Epsom for that purpose; and I beg the favour of the Chairman to take the trouble of presenting them to the Gentlemen who shall meet on that occasion, with my sincere wishes for their happiness, and for that of the Nation in general.

Having now closed thus much of the subject of my letter, I next come to speak of what has relation to me personally. I am well aware of the delicacy that attends it, but the purpose of calling the Meeting appears to me so inconsistent with that justice that is always due between man and man, that it is proper I should (as well on account of the Gentlemen who may meet, as on my own account) explain myself fully and candidly thereon.

I have already informed the Gentlemen, that a prosecution is commenced against a work of which I have the honour and happiness to be the author, and I have good reasons for believing, that the Proclamation which the Gentlemen are called to

consider, and to present an Address upon, is purposely calculated to give an impression to the Jury before whom that matter is to come. In short, that it is dictating a verdict by proclamation; and I consider the instigators of the meeting to be held at Epsom, as aiding and abetting the same improper, and in my opinion illegal purpose, and that in a manner very artfully contrived, as I shall now shew.

Had a Meeting been called of the Freeholders of the County of Middlesex, the Gentlemen who had composed that Meeting, would have rendered themselves objectionable as persons to serve on a Jury before whom the judicial case was afterwards to come. But by calling a Meeting out of the County of Middlesex, that matter is artfully avoided, and the Gentlemen of Surrey are summoned, as if it were intended thereby to give a tone to the sort of verdict which the instigators of the Meeting no doubt wish should be brought in, and to give countenance to the Jury in so doing.

I am, Sir,

With much respect to the

Gentlemen who shall meet,

Their and your

Obedient humble servant,

THOMAS PAINE.

Copied from the
"ARGUS." June 21.